



**CITY OF MESA**  
**HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)**  
**VETERANS TASK FORCE TEAM (VTF)**

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Meeting Agenda

20 E. Main St., Suite 250, Mesa  
11:30am-12:30pm

In attendance: Denise Heap, Chair of the Human Relations Advisory Board  
Mark Tompert, Human Relations Advisory Board member  
Barbara Allison  
Gene Barnes  
Darcy Breault  
Billy Cooper  
Doug Dau  
Troy Friedman  
Tom Gussie  
Corey Harris  
Steve Heppe  
David Lucier  
Rosario Beltran-Joshi, Mesa City Staff  
Ruth Giese, Mesa City Staff  
Justin Smothers, Mesa VISTA member

1. Call to order.

Mr. David Lucier welcomed those present and called the meeting to order.

2. Introduction of new staff liaison, VISTA member Justin Smothers.

Mr. Smothers introduced himself as the City of Mesa's VISTA Veterans Outreach Coordinator and the new primary point of contact between VTF members and the City of Mesa.

Attending VTF members introduce themselves.

3. Approval of minutes from the May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 VTF meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Dau to approve the May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 minutes as stated and Ms. Breault seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Hear update and discuss outlined goals:

a. Preferential hiring for Veterans

Ms. Giese stated that she and Mr. Gussie have been working on the issue of preferential hiring for Veterans employment with the City of Mesa. Ms. Giese mentioned that the Mesa's Human Resources Director is researching various initiatives that go above and beyond common preferential hiring best practices. Ms. Giese explained that a meeting will be scheduled with Human Resources Director to further discuss the issue. Ms. Giese stated that preferential hiring policy decisions will most likely be made at the City Manager or City Council level.

Mr. Lucier asked how the current City of Mesa preferential hiring system for veterans compares to other municipal government practices. Ms. Giese stated that current practices

are baseline when compared with other government entities. Mr. Harris discussed various pending veterans hiring legislation scheduled for consideration by the Arizona General Assembly in 2014. Mr. Lucier recommended that the Mesa and VTF members consider collaborating with Mr. Harris on supporting the adoption of the veterans hiring legislation. Ms. Heap suggested that veterans hiring legislation be placed on the January 2014 HRAB agenda for consideration. Ms. Giese requested that Mr. Harris provide her with the necessary background information.

b. Mesa Public Schools connection

Ms. Heap advised the committee that she discovered the contact information for Dino Recla, Director of At-Risk Student Programs for Mesa Public Schools, during the summer. Ms. Heap stated Dino Recla and Thomas Winkle have developed two training workshops for school counselors which will occur on February 18, 2014. Ms. Heap mentioned that she is seeking volunteers to help video record the workshops for school counselors that are unable to attend. Ms. Heap then said that the workshops will be held as morning and afternoon sessions at the Sunset Bank building on Main Street in Mesa, AZ.

Mr. Harris inquired as to whether or not Mesa had a public access channel. Ms. Giese informed the members that Mesa has a public access channel and explained the procedures by which the station can record and broadcast various events.

c. Central Campus/ Center

Mr. Dau stated that Ms. Kosisky, who was taking the lead on this issue, was not in attendance. It was determined that this agenda item be combined with veterans housing and program funding issues.

d. Matrix of resources and contacts

Ms. Giese stated that this agenda item would be an ongoing matter for consideration now that Mr. Smothers has arrived. Ms. Allison inquired about the vision for a "Veterans one-stop shop." Ms. Giese stated that research into a "Veterans one-stop shop" in Mesa will be conducted by Mr. Smothers. Ms. Breault mentioned that she has already received contacts from Mesa residents that viewed her information on the Mesa's Veterans Resources webpage.

5. Discuss new Mesa Court protocol for diverting defendants with mental health issues, disabilities and veterans.

Ms. Heap stated that she spoke with the presiding Judge of the Mesa City Court who is putting together a program for veterans, mentally ill, and homeless individuals. The new program will be completely different from current programs administered by Maricopa County and Phoenix City Court Systems. The program will offer various avenues for deferment from a criminal record. Ms. Heap stated that she will attend a follow-up meeting with the Mesa Judge in January or February of 2014.

Mr. Lucier stated that the State Bar of Arizona has a specific veterans committee and that there are other organizations that will be able to assist Mesa with this issue. Ms. Heap stated that deferments are a better economic option for Mesa because it keeps people out of jail while allowing them to continue working.

Mr. Lucier asked about Mesa's Police Department (MPD) procedures for dealing with veterans. Mr. Cooper explained the various protocols for dealing with veterans in Mesa. Mr. Lucier suggested that MPD should consider adopting the phrase "have you ever served in the military?" when questioning individuals because the phrase "are you a Veteran?" usually garners a high-level of false positive responses. Mr. Gussie stated that he currently runs a program called C.I.T. (Crisis Intervention Training) and then explained its details of the program.

Mr. Harris discussed social norms of the veteran community and the challenges that this presents for law enforcement and diversion courts. Mr. Harris stated that veterans are reluctant to ask for assistance until they are in "crisis mode." Then, Mr. Gussie discussed the methodology and background behind the creation of the Maricopa County Veterans Court. Mr. Lucier asked if there

was anything that the VTF could do to support a City of Mesa Veterans Court. In response, Ms. Heap replied to advocate for the creation of a Veterans Court with Mesa Council members.

Mr. Gussie stated that Arizona is the only state that provides a veterans information hotline for police officers to contact when making initial contact with an individual. Ms. Allison discussed the specific challenges that veterans and military families dealing with PTSD issues face and suggested that better support and services be provided by state and local government. Mr. Lucier stated that municipal level involvement in veterans issue is critical to solving the issues faced by 600,000 veterans living in Arizona.

Ms. Beltran-Joshi discussed the Mesa's Veterans housing voucher program and the challenges of finding homeless Veterans that qualify for the program.

6. Discuss affordable, supportive, permanent housing for Veterans in Mesa and how VTF may be able to help support such an effort.

Ms. Heap asked about which organizations provide housing for veterans. Ms. Breault explained the services provided by the housing non-profit organizations: Save the Family and A New Leaf. Ms. Beltran-Joshi then described the future opportunities for veterans at the New Leaf organization's La Mesita facility.

Mr. Lucier discussed Cardinal Capital Management's plan to construct a 50 to 60 permanent, supportive, affordable-housing unit structure for veterans near Main Street in Mesa. Mr. Lucier indicated the current goal of the organization is to help veterans maintain and improve housing self-sufficiency. Mr. Lucier acknowledged that land acquisition has been a challenge so far and that it is the first step toward the organization moving the project forward. Ms. Heap offered to provide the contact information for Terry Bennelli who may be able to provide tax credit information for business development near the Metro Valley Light Rail.

Ms. Allison asked about Mesa's participation in homeless count surveying as a means to identify veterans eligible for the housing voucher. Mr. Lucier and Ms. Giese responded that the upcoming survey will be conducted in January or February of 2014.

7. Discuss the ongoing structure of VTF and next meeting date.

Ms. Heap stated that she wanted to add following topics to the January HRAB Ad Hoc VTF agenda for consideration: Veterans-related legislation under review by the Arizona General Assembly in 2014, the Cardinal Capital Management Veterans housing project, and the Mesa Disabled American Veterans transport vehicle funding request.

Ms. Heap then appointed herself as co-chair of VTF the City. Mr. Tompert, HRAB member, agreed with this appointment. Mr. Lucier suggested that future meetings be held monthly and during a weekday lunch hour. The members agreed to meet every third Thursday of the month from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. The meeting venue will be determined at a later date.

Mr. Dau discussed an opportunity for Mesa to financially support the Mesa Disabled American Veterans chapter procuring a medical-use transportation vehicle for veterans. Mr. Dau described what types of support other East Valley local government entities provide Veteran Service Organizations for medical-use transportation vehicles. Ms. Heap stated that does not have grants. Ms. Heap offered a motion to add the matter to the HRAB agenda in January. Mr. Dau seconded the motion. The motion moved unanimously.

8. Closing remarks.

Mr. Lucier thanked all the members for their attendance and continued support. The meeting adjourned at 12:40 pm on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

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